

I know a woman who entered the convent and then left. After several years she decided she did not want to be a nun. She made the decision carefully - through prayer and counseling. Then after more prayer and more counseling she became engaged and married a wonderful man last summer. (Yes, there are still a few wonderful men around; not many, but a few.) My friend's decision was very hard on her - I expected that. I did not expect how hard it would be on her parents. Her father did not attend the wedding and will not speak to her any more. To him, she had committed an unforgivable sin.

I believe this man still accepts responsibility for his daughter's decisions. She has freedom to choose but he cannot let go. He would prefer to bend her will to his, and now he has no peace. Since I have no children of my own I find this feeling hard to imagine, but I know it's out there, because I hear it all the time. Parents find it hard to let go of the decisions their children make. It seems clear to me that we are each responsible for our own decisions; yet, we still take responsibility for the decisions of others.

God has given each of us a marvelous gift. He's given us the gift of freedom. We are free to choose right or wrong, free to choose water or fire, free to choose law or chaos. Free will is a marvelous gift, ~~but~~ I wonder if it was hard for God to give it to us. When God made us his children, was it hard for him to say, "You are free. You may choose what you want, but I am not responsible for your choice."

Like a good parent, God made the rules clear. God spoke the law to Moses. God interpreted the law through Jesus. And it's quite a law - Jesus talks about the big sins: murder, adultery, and apostasy (turning to false gods.) But he also warns against lesser ones: anger, desire, and swearing oaths. In our tiny sins lies the seed of far greater ones. Anger begets murder. Desire begets adultery. Swearing begets apostasy. The simple desire to eliminate pain can lead from legal drugs to illegal drugs to addiction. God has made the rules clear. God has made the choice ours.

How can we let go of someone else's choice? How does God do that? If I may use an analogy from baseball, God pitches the ball but keeps a glove on the other hand. God pitches the ball of freedom but keeps the glove of forgiveness. God is ready to let go, and he's ready to receive back. If we keep forgiveness ready we can let freedom ride.